

# THE BEACON

FOR SCHOOL AND HOME

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Drawing by Heistand Miller

SPRING PLOUGHING

## A Bird in Her Throat

By WINIFRED DAVIDSON

"SING!" Mella Ryer's little three-year-old niece Judy demanded. "Sing a pretty song!"

Mella gulped. "I can't, Judy," she murmured. "See, nice book. Judy look at nice book."

"No, no. Mella sing!" insisted Judy; and small Thomas joined with his sister. "Singee . . . singee!"

Just then Jack Ryer, Mella's brother, came into the room, and the children forgot for the moment that they had been teasing for a song.

"I can't! I can't," Mella told herself as she went to the kitchen to see that Jack's dinner was ready to serve. "It seems to me that I shall never be able to sing again."

When she spoke to Hilda, the cook, Mella's house sounded strangely harsh and broken.

"Fo' de lan' sakes, Miss Melly, whatsy matta wif yo' speaking?" asked Hilda, waving a stirring spoon. "Yo' soun' like yo' had like to cry or somefin'."

"I'm all right, Hilda. Is everything

ready? I'll finish the gravy, while you get ready to serve."

"Don' yo' spill yo' tears into dat cream sauce!" cried Hilda, bustling noisily.

Several times since Mella had come to be little housekeeper in her brother's home, after the death of his wife, she had dreamed that she could go to the city to take vocal lessons. But, just as she was about to ask Jack about the matter, something serious happened to prevent. Once the children were ill, and she had been excused from some of her classes, so that she could be with them. Another time, Hilda was lame, and Mella for two days did all the cooking and serving.

At first, the high trust that Jack had placed in her had been enough.

"If Mella can look after Judy and Thomas I won't worry about them," he had told his mother. "Of course after this year is over, I expect to be back on the farm with you and Dad. There are six hard months ahead of us now — so, if you'll let Mella come —"

How glad the girl had been then! She forgot for the time being that her desire to learn to sing had been filling all her waking thoughts for months and months.

She was too busy to think about herself in those first weeks; getting used to Jack's house; making acquaintances among the town school children; amusing Judy and Thomas in all her spare hours.

The newness of her duties wore off, and in slipping into a humdrum routine, Mella found her old wish growing strong again. She became restless, though she was so happy with Judy and Thomas that it was only when alone in her room that her wish became a thought.

To go to the city once a week. To have time to give to music. To feel once more a bird in her throat as when at home her mother had been pleased at her singing of some simple tune.

Each day, it seemed, the number of things that Mella found to do in Jack's house, increased. The children, growing accustomed to their small aunt, wanted more of her companionship; and when Hilda was tired there were cakes to bake, cookies to bake — all sorts of cooking of little fancy dishes that Hilda never thought of; and when Jack was too busy it was Mella who ordered the groceries, who paid the paper boy, who saw that the gardener kept the yard looking neat. It seemed to Mella that her days could not hold another duty.

In the summer it would be different. Then Jack would move Mella and the children out to the farm, and Hilda would go back to her own little house by the river. And then — perhaps — Mother would find a way by which the singing lessons could begin!

Jack came home one evening, looking sad. "We can't go to the farm this summer, Mella," he announced. "Maybe we can't go before next spring."

"Why, Jack? What made you change your mind?" Mella tried not to let her voice shake.

"The people in the office need me, they say, for a few months longer. I'm sorry, Mella. I know it's hard work for you here. And Mother could hardly spare you so long — but I don't know what I'll do if you don't stay."

"Of course I'll stay," Mella cried. "You know I just love Judy and Thomas! Don't you worry, Jack."



It was easy enough to say it; and she meant it, every word, she told herself. Jack must not know that she had moments of unhappiness.

"You just forget about those singing lessons," she scolded herself. "Just think of the chances you have here! Just suppose Judy and Thomas didn't like you, Mella? Suppose Jack sent you home because you didn't do your work right? Suppose Jack said that he wanted some other girl here in your place, silly?"

How she worked, after she had thought things out like this! She seemed sometimes to be in two places at once, the way she flew through the house, brushing up crumbs scattered by the children, helping Judy to make her little bed, keeping Thomas busy with his toys, briefly taking Hilda's place in the kitchen.

"My, my, chile," Hilda told her one day. "Yo' remember yo' just can't expect to do ev'rything. Yo' got to grow to big girl size befo' yo' can do all the work there is lef' to do."

"I know, Hilda," Mella laughed, "but I have a good reason for keeping busy."

And now she knew that so much time had passed since she had practiced, her voice would no longer be sweet and clear as it used to be. The busier she kept, the less she thought about that foolish notion she had had!

Hilda complained one day that she was completely "wore out" and must go home for a week's rest. It happened that Jack was able to leave his office for part of each day; so that on Mella fell Hilda's work, while their father amused the children. She got up earlier than ever, so as to plan the meals for the day. She ran all the way to school and all the way back, in order to fit into the day's program all the cooking, dish-washing, bed-making, sweeping, dusting and tidying that needed doing. It was late every night when she went to bed.

"Don't work so hard, Mella," Jack warned her. "If Hilda doesn't come back, we'll get someone else."

"Oh, Jack," she insisted, "let me! It isn't so hard now — Judy's learning to help ever so much."

"I want to talk with Mother about your taking singing lessons," her brother said one night. "Just as soon as we can go home, it must be arranged somehow."

"Jack!" It was all Mella could say. She didn't know that Jack was aware of her great wish. Oh, now, everything would be all right. Just a few more months! And if she had worked hard before, now she tried to double her efforts.

One week-end in late spring, Jack drove Mella and the children out to the farm.

Mella could hardly wait to see her mother and father, and to talk over with them the matter of singing lessons.

But again there was disappointment. The work on the farm was too much for

her mother. Her father was about ready to rent the place and come into the town to live. He had thought of going into a little business, he said.

"That will be wonderful," said Mella.

But the thought of the old farm being in the hands of strangers was not pleasant, and the realization that neither she nor the children could have the fun of playing in the woods and fields out there made her feel like crying. She knew, too, that to live in town and start a new business would take all the money that her father had.

"Good-bye, singing lessons!" she said to herself.

Singing lessons! Why, they were simply impossible for her. Even if she could afford them, when would there be time to practice? And of what use would they be, in the end? Always, for years, and years, Judy and Thomas would need somebody to look after them — somebody who really loved them and understood their queer little ways.

For instance, who but Mella understood that, when Thomas sometimes stamped his feet and screamed in anger, the quickest way to stop him and make him sorry was to hold up a looking-glass? When he saw that naughty little face, how quickly he turned himself back into a good boy again! And when Judy was noisy, who but Mella had the patience to sit down with the little girl and read or tell her stories until she had forgotten about running, jumping, pushing chairs around and beating Thomas's drum?

Mella certainly was needed in that house of her brother's. She had so many little ideas for amusing the children that they never grew tired of her suggestions. But there was one thing that she could not, or would not do for them, No matter how they begged her to sing, she refused.

"No. I can't!" Until she came back from the farm that last time, she always answered that way when Judy and Thomas asked for a song.

"Don't you know any songs?" Judy asked.

Mella nodded her head. "I know about a hundred," she said.

"Well, sing us just one!"

Though she felt more like going upstairs and letting the tears have their way, Mella at last began to sing. She thought, for a moment, that her voice would not come. And when she had started the song, she was surprised that her voice sounded very clear and true. She became interested in remembering the old music that she had loved. Both Judy and Thomas were fast asleep, when Jack found them.

"Good news!" he said. "I've been promoted. Dad and Mother are going to stay on the farm, and you three are going out there tomorrow. And Mella, your singing lessons have been paid for — a year in advance! You certainly have earned them."

## March

By M. LOUISE C. HASTINGS

March is trudging up the hillside  
Slowly, line by line;  
Soon she'll burst her million blossoms,  
Everything will shine.

Lo! a miracle has happened.  
Spring is at her shrine!

## The Lost Badge

By M. Wilma Stubbs

**I**T had been a morning to remember. Karolina would think about it and talk about it for weeks to come.

They had left the small village where Karolina lived very early in the morning, reaching Prague\* in plenty of time to watch the parades and reviews. For this was the Republic's birthday.

Karolina was all excitement when the President was pointed out to her. She had been told a great many times of the splendid way in which he had worked for the freedom of their country. He looked so wise and kind she thought.

At noon they had stopped in front of an ancient clock in the tower of the old Town Hall. On the face of the clock were painted astronomical signs. Just at twelve Karolina saw the doors above the face of the clock open and the figures of the twelve apostles pass in line, while the crowing of a cock and twelve strokes told the hour of noon.

For the mid-day meal they found a quiet inn in a side street. The quaint old house almost leaned against a side hill. From the courtyard they climbed stairway after stairway until they reached a lovely garden spot where they could look out over the city while they ate.

It was all wonderful and Karolina was so happy until she discovered that her badge was gone, the Sokol badge that was so much a part of the Republic's independence day.

"A Sokol?" I think I hear you ask. "What is that?"

If you had asked Karolina, I think she would have answered something like this. "Once we Czechs — Bohemians — were a great nation. We had a reformer, John Huss, and an educator, Comenius. But the Roman Church conquered and the new religion was forbidden in Bohemia. Our country became a part of the Austrian Empire and suffered much from oppression. But there were patriots left in Bohemia. To some of these came the idea of founding a society that would fit our people for freedom when it should come. The Sokols were the result. Soon there were societies all over Bohemia and among the Czechs in other parts of the world. In them we have training to develop us physically, that

\*The capital of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia was formerly Bohemia.



is, to give us strong bodies, and they provide libraries and social centers so that our minds may grow. They teach unselfishness and self-restraint and that right is stronger than force. President Masaryk believes also that, for strong bodies and clear brains, his people should say 'No' to alcoholic drink of all kinds. Trained for the use of liberty, after the World War we became the Republic of Czechoslovakia."

So to Karolina the precious bit of metal with the words, "Na Straz!" "On Guard!" was a part of this wonderful Independence Day. How could she have been careless enough to lose it? And the worst of it was that she wouldn't know where to look for it. They had walked through so many streets.

Another family party came into the garden. The two men greeted each other warmly.

"In the old days Frantisek and I went to the village school together," Karolina's father explained. "But Frantisek went

away, far across the ocean. Now he has come back with this fine family."

The little girl, Bozena, and Karolina were soon good friends. Bozena could speak English like her mother tongue and Karolina was learning the strange language and wanted help. They were planning an afternoon of sightseeing together when Karolina noticed that Bozena was wearing a Sokol badge.

"You have Sokols over there in America," she said.

"Yes. But not where we live. We are the only Czech family in our town. Father says I may join while I am here.

"Oh, the badge? I found that just now, a little way down the street. Perhaps I oughtn't to wear it, but should try to find the owner. Wearing it made me feel just a little as if I belonged."

Karolina said nothing. After all it didn't matter so very much. Of course it was her badge. But by and by Bozena would really belong and have a badge of her own.

the flower. While not conspicuous, being of a yellowish-white color, it contains a great amount of nectar, thus attracting



scores of bees, humming birds and orioles. The flower lasts for seven or eight months. During this time, the insects and birds literally swarm about its tiny flowerlets.

The Agave, which also grows in Mexico, produces one of the popular drinks of that country. Its leaves are used to feed animals, while the fiber is made into hemp. In Spain, Portugal and Italy, the good housewives use the leaves for scouring kitchen utensils and cleaning floors.

## A Giant Bouquet

By Genevra A. Cowan

THE blossom of the *Agave Americana* might well be mistaken for a flower grown in a giant's posy garden for it rises into the air from 25 to 40 feet. It is, however, merely a tropical plant, native of tropical America and southwestern United States but frequently seen in California gardens.

The Agave has another strange characteristic. Years may elapse before a flower appears, in fact, sometimes so many years pass that it was formerly believed that only after one hundred years did the plant bloom. Hence it was commonly called the century plant. Although this belief is incorrect, the name persists. Sometimes ten years pass, sometimes twenty-five years, before the blossom appears, climatic conditions and amount of moisture influencing the plant.

Unlike flowers known as annuals or perennials, and bearing many blossoms, the Agave produces but one flower. Having blossomed once during its lifetime, the entire plant dries and dies, never to revive or grow again. Around the base of the mother plant, however, scores of small Agaves appear. Each of these may be transplanted forming the exact duplicate of the original stock.

The name Agave is taken from the Greek word *aguos*, which means admirable. This adjective applies especially to

## An Easter Exercise

By SALLY ELLIOTT ALLEN

(Six girls, carrying flowers, enter.  
The first steps forward and speaks.)

FIRST:

I am the *Spirit of Easter*,  
E-oster, goddess of spring,  
Garments of gladness I wear,  
Flowers in my hair,  
And memories I bring,—  
Memories of griefs that are gone,  
Of darkness past,  
Of longings come to their own  
At last — at last!

SECOND:

*Beauty* my hands uplift,  
Behold, I fling it wide;  
Precious and free my gift,  
Open your eyes, open your hearts,  
That it may abide.

THIRD:

*Joy* I bring to you,  
A happy heart and gay,  
That you may pluck, as children do,  
Flowers along the way.

FOURTH:

For you of heavy hearts  
A steady gift I bring,  
*Courage* is its strong name,  
Look up and sing!

FIFTH:

The gift I bear lies deep in your own  
hearts,  
It stirs once more with coming of the  
spring,  
Give it its wings and it shall rise again,  
Out of the dark eternal *Hope* I bring.

SIXTH:

Miraculous, beloved, terrible, my gift  
— *LIFE*.  
Thrilling in the dead dark the buried  
seed,  
Flinging its song from blue, ecstatic  
heights,  
Guiding dark footsteps through the  
jungle nights,  
Parting swift waters with its flashing  
need,  
Or striding earth to save or to destroy  
itself;  
Now beautiful, now foul; passing, re-  
newed.  
Rising today like tide, mysterious,  
dear,  
Once more returns in the returning  
year,  
With beauty, joy, hope, courage all  
imbued — *LIFE*.



# THE BEACON CLUB

## The Editor's Post Box

Writing a letter for this corner makes you a member of the Club. Address, The Beacon Club, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass.

TRAPELO RD.,  
WALTHAM, MASS.

Dear Editor: I would like to become a member of the Beacon Club and wear its pin. I like *The Beacon* very much.

I shall be ten years old next month and am in the fifth grade. I go to the Unitarian Sunday school. Mrs. Smith is my teacher. We are studying *Boys and Girls of Other Lands*. Our superintendent is Mrs. Hartwell. I think our church school is the best one anywhere.

Our minister is Rev. Kenneth C. Gesner. One day when my little sister was sick Mr. Gesner came to call. My mother was cooking onions and the house smelled like it, too. There is a saying that an onion a day keeps everybody away, but we think it brings the minister.

This is the longest letter I have ever written.

Your friend,  
BETTY CASTNER.

115 WOBURN ST.,  
READING, MASS.

Dear Editor: I should like to be a member of the Beacon Club. I go to the Unitarian Church. My minister's name is Rev. Mr. Ham; my teacher's name is Miss Marcia Ham. This is my third year of perfect attendance at Sunday school. I am eleven years old.

Sincerely yours,  
JANET BOYLE.

228 WEST ST.,  
WORCESTER, MASS.

Dear Editor: I would like very much to belong to the Beacon Club and wear its pin. I am ten years old and am in the sixth grade of Bancroft School. I go to a Unitarian Church and have been a Scout for three months.

Sincerely yours,  
ROSAMOND RILEY.

Other new members of our Club are: Thornton D. Davis, Berkeley, California; Alice Osbon, Dover, N. H.; and the following in Massachusetts: Sylvia Schmidt, Athol; Nancy Lowe, Belmont; Philip Sanborn, Canton; Florence Walker, Dorchester; Harriet Depinet and Mildred Turner, Gardner; Hazel Bradbury, Hingham Center; Gladys Atkinson, Hopedale; Doris Urlass, Jamaica Plain; Jean Frye, Marlboro; Margaret Mason and Ruth

OUR PURPOSE: Helpfulness.

OUR MOTTO: Let your light shine.

OUR BADGE: The Beacon Club Button.

Lamont McAnaul, Marblehead; Nancy Cushman and Jeannette Weeks, Melrose; Louise Cook, New Bedford; Priscilla Louise Merritt and Donald A. Porter, Norwell; Anna L. Bancroft, Tyngsboro; Barbara Brigham, Westboro; Lloyd Lovell, West Hingham; Elizabeth Leonard, West Springfield.

## The Right Way to Read

By JOHN F. COWAN

Reading is not just repeating printed words any more than counting money is being rich. Real reading is making the thought in the words our own. Writing your name in the front of a book does not make it yours. A book, until properly read, is a gold mine not yet worked.

One good way of reading a book so as to make its thoughts yours, is: After reading a chapter, write down the heading and under it all the ideas in the chapter. That chapter will be yours; even burning the book would not take it from you. I met a blind man who can tell the substance of a hundred books that have been read to him.

In reading a newspaper or magazine, read as you eat — select from the bill of fare what you want. It would be as foolish to try to eat all on the table, as to read all of a newspaper. Read the headings and pick out what is best. Part of the food from the market goes into the garbage can. That is all some items in the daily paper are fit for, as far as a boy is concerned.

In picking out books and magazine stories, don't try to make a meal of cake and spices. Sometimes a boy says: "Oh, I don't want anything but adventure stories." That is as if we sat at the table and kept saying, "Please pass the catsup," and ate nothing else. Books and magazine articles on how to make boats, bats, radios, gliders, and other things are like the bread and meat at dinner. Stories telling how Edison, Marconi, Caruso, Harry Lauder, Herbert Hoover, became successful men are like the egg and bacon for breakfast. They will make a boy strong for winning his way in life.

An old saying is: "Reading makes a full man." Full of what? Some adventure, romance, fairy-tales are good, as cake and candy at a meal; but the "balanced diet" mother talks about, calls for history, biography, science, knowledge of how to live.

## Puzzlers

### A Box of Pills

When Ben was taken very ill  
They made him take a sugared pill.

This pill, per box cost twice two times  
The sum of five cents plus two dimes.

And of these sugared pills took Ben  
Just sixty cents' worth less cents ten.

That box held fifty times one pill, —  
How many took Ben, who was ill?

CHARLES NEVERS HOLMES.

### A Diamond

A letter.  
Evil.  
A part of the body.  
Something that is never old.  
A letter.

E. F. B.

### Twisted Names of Boys

1. Ygrroeg.
2. Nojh.
3. Erawrn.
4. Mililaw.
5. Ryhne.
6. Btehrrre.
7. Lreecane.
8. Lrseslu.
9. Rhmai.
10. Sjeam.

JOHN MARTIN,  
Dorchester, Mass.

### Answers to Puzzlers in No. 20

A Doctor's Visits. — Six Visits.

Twisted Bible Names. — 1. Judges.  
2. Mark. 3. Ruth. 4. Chronicles. 5. Romans. 6. Daniel. 7. Hebrews. 8. James. 9. Peter. 10. Titus.

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